

Black & Pink



SEPTEMPER 2015 NEWSPAPER



ASHLEY DIAMOND RELEASED FROM PRISON AFTER 3 YEARS

Ashley Diamond, the 37-year-old black transgender woman whose federal lawsuit against the Georgia Department of Corrections alleged the prison's denial of her hormone therapy and failure to protect her from repeated sexual assault to be "cruel and unusual punishment," was released from prison today.

According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, which has been representing Diamond in her suit, Diamond was released from Augusta State Medical Prison to members of her family at 8:45 a.m. today.

"I'm overjoyed to be with my family again and out of harm's way," Diamond said in a statement shared by SPLC. "Although the systematic abuse and assaults I faced for more than three years have left me emotionally and physically scarred, I'll continue to fight for justice and to shine a light on the gross mistreatment of transgender inmates in Georgia and nationwide."

Diamond had already served three years of an 11-year sentence stemming from a nonviolent offense in 2012. Despite identifying as a woman at the time she was incarcerated, Diamond was consistently housed with men, and she reported several instances of sexual assault inside the numerous Georgia facilities where she was housed. The most recent allegation of sexual assault was revealed in July, when Diamond claimed a cellmate assaulted her and threatened to kill her.

Diamond also alleges that prison officials consistently refused to grant her access to her medically necessary hormone therapy — a common clinical treatment to help transgender people experiencing gender dysphoria, the clinical term to describe a "marked incongruence between one's experienced/expressed gender and assigned gender," according to the newest edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

The progressive law group notes that Diamond was eligible for her first parole hearing in November, but was released early — just five days after SPLC "filed additional documents supporting her motion for preliminary injunction in a lawsuit filed in February."

"While we're thrilled that Ashley Diamond is out of prison, our lawsuit is far from over," said Chinyere Ezie, SPLC staff attorney in a press release. "Ashley has endured more than three years of systematic abuse based on the Georgia Department of Corrections' unconstitutional policies toward transgender inmates and woeful lack of care. Her release does not erase her barbaric treatment by GDC officials, which was tantamount to torture. Nor is her plight isolated. We will continue to advocate for an end to prison practices that unfairly punish and inflict pain on transgender inmates."

That lawsuit alleges that Georgia prison officials repeatedly violated Diamond's Eighth Amendment rights, allegedly failing to protect her from repeated rapes by other inmates, and refusing to grant her access to her medically necessary hormone treatments.

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Despite documenting that she had been on hormone therapy for 17 years prior to her incarceration, Diamond was taken off that treatment when she was arrested in 2012 for burglary and theft, according to her lawsuit. Georgia state law requires state prisons to continue providing medication prescribed to inmates prior to their arrests, but a supposed clerical "error" had kept Diamond's hormones off her prison paperwork.

Last year, Diamond went public with this alleged abuse, as well as her story of sexual violence that she says she faced daily in Baldwin State Prison, a men's facility in Milledgeville, Ga. Through her attorneys at the SPLC, Diamond described the rape, assaults, and physical effects of being denied her prescribed hormone therapy as "torture" and a "death sentence." In her lawsuit, she explained that she had suffered severe depression and gender dysphoria because of her treatment and had attempted to commit suicide.

Diamond's fight received a huge boost in April when, in response to her lawsuit, the federal government issued a landmark statement backing her claim that her constitutional right to incarceration free of "cruel and unusual punishment" had been violated when prison staff continually refused to provide the hormone therapy she had been on for nearly two decades prior to incarceration.



A photo of Ashley Diamond

But Diamond's allegations of sexual abuse were not addressed by the federal ruling. Diamond told the courts that such treatment had continued at Baldwin and, after she received a "sexually explicit" note while in church May 3, she was moved to a second medium-security men's facility: Rutledge State Prison in Columbus, Ga. Diamond told her lawyers she'd received several similar letters previously, with others being sent to members of her family.

While awaiting transfer to Augusta State Medical Prison, Diamond alleges that she was sexually assaulted by her male cellmate on June 10 while temporarily held at an unspecified Georgia state prison in Reidsville. Diamond reported the alleged assault to Rutledge authorities after returning from her medical trip. Prison officials responded by placing her attacker in an isolated cell and investigating whether the incident was caught on camera. A separate investigation under the federal Prison Rape Elimination Act is also under way, notes U.K. newspaper The Telegraph.

Diamond's July report alleged that Rutledge warden Shay Hatcher informed other inmates about the alleged sexual assault as well as the name of her attacker. Diamond says several inmates then called her a "snitch," and that she faced threats if she did not withdraw her complaint. Before her transfer to Augusta, Diamond told her lawyers that she was too frightened to leave her cell without an escort, even for meals.

Hatcher denied Diamond's account.

The Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003 demands a "zero tolerance" policy for sexual assaults; however, audits on whether prisons have complied with the act's provisions did not begin until 2013, according to the American Civil Liberties Union.

Research has found that transgender women are particularly vulnerable to rape while housed in men's prisons. While LGBT inmates in general are at a nine times a higher risk for sexual assault according to government data, one 2009 California study found that trans women faced 13 times the risk of other LGB inmates when detained in male facilities. The Prison Rape Elimination Act recommends that facilities be aware of trans prisoners' unique safety needs, and assess "case-by-case" how to protect them from sexual assault. Sometimes this means housing trans women in solitary confinement for their own "protection," despite the practice being shown to be psychologically harmful.

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Statement of Purpose

Black & Pink is an open family of LGBTQ
prisoners and "free world" allies who support
each other. Our work toward the abolition
of the prison industrial complex is rooted
in the experience of currently and formerly
incarcerated people. We are outraged by
the specific violence of the prison industrial
complex against LGBTQ people, and respond
through advocacy, education, direct service,
and organizing.

Black & Pink is proudly a family of people of all
races.

About this Newspaper

Since 2007, Black & Pink free world volunteers
have pulled together a monthly newspaper
primarily composed of material written by our
family's incarcerated members. In response to
letters we receive, more prisoners receive the
newspaper each issue!

This month, the newspaper is being sent to
over: **7,544** prisoners!

Disclaimer:

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people's privacy. Pieces may be edited to fit our
anti-oppression values and based on our Editing
Guidelines.

This month's header is by Benito G
in CA.

A MESSAGE FROM JASON

Dear friends,

I hope this note finds you as well as possible. As I write this note Black and Pink outside members are preparing for our 10 year anniversary celebration, A Decade of Black and Pink. We are all scurrying around pulling pieces together to get as many formerly incarcerated LGBTQ people as possible out to Boston. Amazing volunteers are putting hours of effort into this gathering. I look forward to sharing with you all what we learn and build out of the weekend.

This September marked the 44th anniversary of the Attica uprising. The prisoner justice movement in the United States lifts this moment up as a turning point in reform/abolitionist efforts. The brave people who stood up for themselves, and other prisoners, in Attica, did so with a hope and belief that things could be different. For three days they held the prison, demanding changes in treatment and conditions they were experiencing. They tried, in good faith, to negotiate their demands. They brought in observers and negotiators to help come to a peaceful resolution; a resolution that would include prisoners regaining some sense of humanity. Tragically, Governor Rockefeller had a different idea. With the support of President Nixon, the Governor sent in the police to take back the prison through violence. The police killed 33 prisoners that day and ten guards. While the media and police tried to blame the deaths on prisoners, it was proven that every single murder that day, including the murders of prison guards, was done by the state police. The prisoners in Attica were trying to fight for their humanity, but because the government and police have no humanity of their own many lives were stolen that day.

On a recent trip to New York City I watched a movie about a similar uprising. But this time the uprising was in São Paulo, Brazil. Carandiru prison was the largest prison in all of South America, warehousing over 8,000 prisoners. The movie I watched told the story of many different prisoners, including stories about gay men and transgender women. The movie also covered many of the struggles prisoners were going through, including dealing with the AIDS epidemic. In 1992, twenty one years after the Attica uprising, prisoners in Carandiru rose up because of the inhumane treatment they were experiencing. They took over a portion of the prison, barricaded themselves in, and made demands for better treatment and conditions. The government of Brazil responded similar to Governor Rockefeller and sent in the military police to take control of the prison. The military police shot and killed 102 prisoners that day. Survivors of the uprising say that the military police fired upon prisoners who had surrendered already. Again, prisoners were trying to stand up for their humanity, but the lack of humanity in the government and police led to over 100 deaths.

While the police who killed the 33 prisoners at Attica were never prosecuted, in Brazil, nearly 76 police involved in the murders that day were sentenced to between 48 and 156 years in prison. It took until April of last year for the last of the police to be convicted for their actions that day. Retaliation/punishment/justice for the prisoners' deaths was not limited to the court system. In 1993 the Director of the prison was assassinated and in 2002 the prison was finally demolished. The response to what happened in Brazil was very different than what has happened here in the US following the Attica uprising. Some of you reading this newspaper right now are still housed in this notorious prison and conditions have not improved much since the 1970s. What can we learn from our friends in Brazil?

I have been finding myself wondering what international solidarity would look like in the anti-prison struggle. What would it look like for Black and Pink to partner with or build relationships with organizations in Brazil? Or, as Turkey is building an LGBT specific prison, how can we align in the struggle with the people in Turkey trying to stop prison construction in the name of keeping LGBT people safe? Can you imagine us making alliances across the globe? We are an incredible network here in the US, reaching nearly 10,000 LGBTQ prisoners across the country. With this strength, what can you imagine us doing together? Let's be creative with our movement building, knowing that once there were no prisons, that day will come again.

In loving solidarity, Jason

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10 YEARS OF SOLIDARITY! DECADE of BLACK & PINK

October 16-18 2015
Boston, MA

BLACK AND PINK HOTLINE NUMBER!!!

After over a year of thinking about how to make this happen we are now announcing that people can call us. The phone number is **617.519.4387**. Your calls will be answered as often as possible. We are not currently able to set up accounts, so calls must be either pre-paid or collect. The hotline will be available Sundays 1-5pm (Eastern Time) for certain. You can call at other times as well and we will do our best to answer your calls.

The purpose of the hotline is for 3 primary things:

1. Story telling. We are trying to collect stories of incarcerated members to turn into a recording that we can play at our 10 year anniversary celebration in October. Your voices are important to us and we want to make sure they are part of this event. We want to make time to record your story if you give us permission.
2. Supportive listening. Being in prison is lonely, as we all know. The hotline is here for supportive listening so you can just talk to someone about what is going on in your life.
3. Organizing. If there are things going on at your prison in terms of lock downs, guard harassment, resistance, and anything else that should be shared with the public, let us know so we can spread the word.

Restrictions:

The hotline is not a number to call about getting on the pen pal list or to get the newspaper.

The hotline is not a number to call for sexual or erotic chatting.

The hotline is not a number for getting help with your current court case, we are not legal experts.

We look forward to hearing from you! This is our first attempt at this so please be patient with us as we work it all out. We will not be able to answer every call, but we will do our best.

We are sorry to share that we can only accept prepaid calls at this time. We apologize to anyone who has been trying to get through to the hotline with no success. We are still working this system out. Thank you for being understanding.

RELIGIOUS SUBMISSIONS WANTED

Black and Pink is compiling a zine about prison, faith, and sexuality.

Please submit your neatly written submission of 3 or fewer pages to:

Black and Pink - The Spirit Inside
614 Columbia Road
Dorchester MA 02125

Drawings also welcomed.

We would like your help in putting together a zine (miniature magazine) or resource guide about religion and spirituality for and by LGBTQ+ people behind bars. We'd like to request written homily, reflection, teaching, drawing, poem, or other resource for people behind bars.

With your submission about faith and prison or sexuality, please include the name of your religion/faith/spirituality (Example: Christianity, Paganism, Judaism) and your sect or denomination (Example: Baptist, none, Reform)

We welcome anything in your own words, but for space and variety, not all submissions can be accepted. By submitting, you give Black and Pink permission to publish your writing in print and on the Internet.

Dear Black and Pink Family,

I am so thankful for all of you. It's a blessing to know we are not alone, isn't it? I love you all and love this newspaper.

Attention People in charge of prisons all across the USA!!

The following is one solution to the problem of keeping those who have committed sex offenses against children from re-offending.

The child molestation epidemic in this country will never go away until someone steps in and actually tries to understand the causes and apply effective solutions to the problem. The prison system is a total failure in this case. The proof is in the high number of offenders returning to prison two, three or four times. The prisons' treatment programs are currently like putting Band-Aids on a shotgun wound. Prisons require offenders to take ineffective treatment programs only to be expected to return to society without ever offending again. The offenders fail, proving the treatment programs are inappropriate and ineffective. I've devoted many years and many thousands of dollars on college studies. One focus was on the cognitive process of adult males who are attracted to young boys/girls. I have 2 college degrees, graduating with honors, completing 177 (almost enough to be a doctor) academic hours from Amarillo College, Dallas Baptist University and the University of Texas in Austin.

I have written papers on interviews with case studies of free world men who confessed to being pedophiles and pederasts—those who are sexually attracted to children. In my over 23 years of prison life, I have interviewed many guys who are serving very lengthy sentences for having committed sexual offenses against young boys and girls. I do not judge these men, so they tend to open up to me. None of them want to re-offend or come back to prison. To fix any problem, we must first understand what went wrong with the individuals.

What I have learned from these interviews is that the majority of these case studies include stories of repeated failed attempts at establishing and maintaining age appropriate sexual relationships with adults.

The problems these men face originate from their early childhood lives. The familiar thread in most of their stories was being raised in a dysfunctional family. Parents, who were supposed to set positive examples of how to love and be loved, failed miserably, abusing each other and often times abusing their children. These young guys grew up to be just as dysfunctional as their parents were. They carry the hate and abuse they observed and received from their parents into their own adult relationships and also fail miserably. They had no idea how to establish and maintain meaningful relationships with adults.

These men aren't receiving the nurturing, the love or compassion that we all crave and need as human beings. We are physical beings in need of companionship, of physical contact with other human beings, usually of our same age group. When these case studies failed to receive the physical contact and nurturing, humans strive to receive, these men fall into a deep depression and loneliness and feel rejected.

Somewhere in all our lives, a young child has crawled into our laps, given us hugs or shown us unconditional love. Emotionally healthy men, who have successful physical relationships with other adults, accept the children's attention and affections, moving on with life, thinking nothing of it. However, with the men who are failures in adult physical relationships who are starving for affection, lonely and unloved, the affections of these children overwhelm them.

Most of my case studies told me they experienced the euphoria of feeling loved, needed and wanted for the first time in their lives when they had contact with a young child. It was a high for them. As with drugs and alcohol, this high turned into an addiction, taking over the men's lives. The more attention and affection the men received, the more they craved from these children. These adult men have their needs for human contact filled by the children's hugs and affections they weren't receiving from an adult. These men told me they became intentionally placing themselves in places and situations where they would be surrounded by children, hoping to receive more the affection and unconditional love. The relationships between these men and children evolved dramatically from simple friendships, into very complex emotional and physical relationships where lines were crossed and inappropriate sexual contact was made. Sometimes the children instigated the sex play as curiosity. The children laugh and seem to be willing participants in sex play. These positive responses the men receive to their advances, reinforces the offender's beliefs that what they were doing was okay. The adult men have flawed cognitive processing, ignoring the knowledge that these children are not mature enough to consent to such sexual activities.

Now that we have some understanding of how these men became attracted to children sexually, we can seek and apply appropriate methods of treatment to repair the damage that occurred along the way.

First we need to replace the negative behavior with a positive one so the offender stops offending. The men in my case studies failed at age appropriate relationships. That's what started the negative downturn in their thinking process. These men need to be taught and to practice establishing and maintaining affectionate, loving relationships with other adults. As a result, they will have their human needs of human contact, and unconditional love fulfilled, eliminating the feelings of rejection, depression and loneliness they experienced in their past relationships with adults and no longer need the inappropriate contact with children.

Through their experiences, the male offenders learned the negative thought process that led them to act inappropriately with children. They can re-learn that they can have meaningful, fulfilling relationships with adults.

The prisons need to get off their asses and instigate appropriate and

effective treatment for the male sex offenders now. Programs need to teach these men skills they can use to establish new relationships. Then, teach them methods for maintaining these newly established relationships with other adults and guide them in ways to progress into intimacy with their new adult partners appropriately. The prison system is the ideal environment to begin the healing process. There are no children here to tempt the offenders and the offenders have lots of free time on their hands to focus on treatment progress. Currently the Texas Prison System waits until the end of an offender's sentence before beginning any treatment. Since the offender is going to be here, why not begin appropriate treatment at the beginning of his sentence? That gives the offender a better chance at learning the skills and practicing new relationships with adults over the entire length of his sentence. I propose the prisons allow the offenders permission to establish intimate relationships with adults while in prison as part of their treatment plan. Just think, if the offenders learn to enjoy successful relationships with adults, there is a greater chance that children will no longer be victimized by these offenders. If prison authorities are serious about ending sexual assaults on children, they should get serious about appropriate and effective treatment of adult sex offenders, or is it the goal of the prison industrial complex to keep the beds full?

We all want the abuse to end. Give the offenders the treatment they need so they can receive and give companionship and love, to adults, filling that need for human touch we all have.

The current prison therapy programs are seriously flawed. They put the offender in a room and there is a lot of talking going on. That's it. Sexual acts against children are physical acts that need to be replaced by legal, appropriate sex acts with adults. This isn't going to happen by talking to someone and expecting them to just change automatically. It takes practicing new, legal activities to push out the illegal ones. New, healthier habits replace old, destructive ones, only with practice of the new habits. Therapy in an office does nothing to replace the illegal habits of a sex offender. If you want to get better at tennis, you don't talk about it and succeed. You must physically practice to improve.

Prison policies need to be initiated that allow those inmates convicted of sex offenses against children to participate in adult, age appropriate sexual relationships while serving their sentences. A qualified therapist should be available to offer advice for finding an appropriate mate, establishing a relationship and maintaining these adult relationships successful. Over years of practicing healthy, adult, real-life sexual relationships, the old illegal habits will be replaced with new legal ones and the offender is much more likely to never offend against children again. A treatment program like this is just what people in society should be fighting for in order to end sexual crimes against children.

The costs are justifiable when you ask yourselves "How much is our children's safety worth?" What kind of person wouldn't approve funding that would prevent even one child from becoming a victim?

For the struggle,
Wiz Kid, TX

Black & Pink family- first off I'd like to say hey sweeties!!!

I would like to thank the Black & Pink org & family for your words—your support & the sharing of your lives & lives around the nation- lives which in essence are the same as mine. I want to address issues of the double edged sword known as (P.R.E.A.). It is only a double edged sword because we the community allow it to be so through our actions & lack thereof. T.D.C.J. is currently using the back hand edge of this sword to make me suffer. I am a general population close-custody inmate (due to refusal of safe-keeping) on a high security facility men's prison. They run Rec. maybe 1 time a month on this unit. So it's a seg unit with lesser commissary privileges. I am housed single-cell, due supposedly "to showers in the cell" which I might add is optional according to (P.R.E.A.) yet I am forced to be segregated due to my gender identity. This is also due to the lack of "Brothers" & "Sisters" not being open & honest to officials upon "interrogation" by safe prisons officials. (P.R.E.A) can work for us... But only if we allow it. (P.R.E.A.) entitles us to many rights, yet few fight or speak up for those rights in our prison community in Texas.

In T.D.C.J. power is in numbers! I would like to encourage others to pick up the pen & fight since that counts the most these days. File & notify safe prisons of first, your identity. Then move to write grievances on the violations of your rights according to (P.R.E.A.) standards of health & care. Force the issues at hand. So not only can they use (P.R.E.A.) to hinder us but to benefit & free us from gender repression & oppression.

(P.R.E.A.) grants us availability of gender related items purchasable at commissary no matter if in male facilities or female facilities. The rights to be addressed by your self identity rather than what officers perceive and presume due to genitalia or government housing/placement, privacy shakedown rights and more. It is only right that they enforce all the rules or rights that (P.R.E.A.) entitles us to. This can only be done through unity & numbers—through law & written, as well as verbal words.

I leave with this thought: Earth's most impassable barriers are often those formed, not of walls and trenches, nor even mountains and oceans, but of laws and words! What's real?

Love is <3<3<3
Kiesha, TX

Dear Black & Pink Family,

Sending big love your way. I hope you're all healthy and happy and getting involved in our collective trans struggle for gender liberations. Whether you're in or out that is your choice, for your personal reasons. Do what is safe for you. That is what matters most. Whatever your choice, or whenever you are and always will be or where value and valued for your efforts to liberate our imprisoned trans family.

Here at Kern Valley State Prison, in the state of California, being of gender variant characteristics is a rather severe detriment. We are starved daily with insufficient meal portions and the lowest possible food quality. On top of that, the foods are also contaminated with substances that are sickening when digested. Also, the custodial staff here are transmisogynist in the extreme, daily directing their transphobic verbiage toward trans people of color especially. In this low-brow manner they find hilarity. We as trans people are in a "new barbaria" here. And sad to say, cis gay and butch lesbian prison staff are at the forefront of trans oppression in what was once thought to be a progressive and golden state of California. Never to be hindered, onward in struggle for trans liberation.

Another threat to our trans community looming largely on the horizon for imprisoned trans people are the growing popularity of and designation of increasing varieties of types of psychiatric imprisonments, especially for those identifying as trans. And the accompanying medicalization of those deemed trans. The capitalist profiteering of the forensic clinical staff are at the lowest rungs of their dubious (forensic) profession and are therefore no friend of those of gender variant expression. Personally, the term "gender dysphoria" causes me to almost puke, as it is applied to anyone deemed trans. And by use of this term, being medically considered defective due to being trans is highly offensive and can seriously retard our progress and growth. (Although, I am aware that it is necessary to obtain gender supportive medications—unfortunately). So, family, I think it will serve our interest best to remain ever vigilant and choose wisely the means and methods we utilize to embody our genders, and to work collectively to transform and to abolish what is detrimental to us; and to "not" seek to reform that which is corrupt and irredeemable.

Until next time, keeping you in my prayers. With best interests at heart. Stay safe, healthy, and always resourceful!

Titia, CA

Dear LGBTQ family,

Today is Sunday March 8, 2015 and I hope wherever you all are at in this time of life or the place you currently are at that you all are keeping your head held high. My name is Animal, that's currently serving an 11 year prison sentence cuz I took the law into my own hands and beat a straight man half to death with a homemade billy club that's labeled and called a blackjack. I done altogether of 25 years in prison, started off at 17 years old in C.Y.A. (California Youth Authority) I was actually trying to provide for my family at this young age at the time of 17 years old... I do understand the struggle that you all go through as being a family of LGBTQ movement. Don't ever forget who you are and look out and embrace the rest of the family in love even if they're not your lover, but embrace them with the love of sister, brother, uncle, aunt, father, mother, cause I do that with the ones in the institution here in northern California. I can say that I finally am in a relationship with an older gay man. He's my world, strength and soul. It saddens me, 'cause I have a possible parole date coming up in the next 4 years, in the year of 2019 and he's already been down already for around 28 years straight, like as myself I been down for a total of 26 years. See I am a gay boy myself and I have love for him especially and I know he feels the same way for me. He's doing life without parole what we here in California call having a L-wopp (life without). I have to leave him in this god awful place of a hell hole and that hurts me so much that I can't take him with me at all, so we can live our life out there in the free world together.

I got something I wanted to share with you all that's initialed as follows:

"7 Lovely Logics"

- 1) Make peace with your past so it doesn't spoil your present
- 2) What others think of you is none of your business
- 3) Time heals almost everything, give it some time
- 4) No one causes your happiness except you yourself
- 5) Don't compare your life with others, you have no idea what their journey is all about.
- 6) Stop thinking too much, it's alright not to know all the answers
- 7) Smile. You don't own all the problems in the world.

Before I close this I reach out and embrace you all of family, love, respect, and have communion with the family wherever you're at behind bars or in the free world. I understand the fight and struggle we all go through being part of the LGBTQ family. However I know that straights do gay bash and do try to pick on the gays in prison and call us names, out of our names, like punks, faggots and many other type of names. We as being LGBTQ wherever you're at in the life or free in the world or behind these walls hang out and show unity with the rest of the family. We show the guards, other inmates/convicts, and the free world that it's alright and safe to be family and a LGBTQ wherever you're at. I will now close with my respect and love to you all. Be strange, safe, and love one another.

Your Cali Gay Boy

With embracing you all, Animal, CA.

Hello my name is Geoff from Upstate/Western NY, presently in Federal prison in MA. I am 6'3" tall with long red hair (which kind of puts me in a minority because I am a true redhead, also known as a Ginger) and deep blue eyes. I am a Pagan, Bisexual gentleman who is also a SO, who is open minded and patient. I am new to this publication. I am going to treat this letter sort of like a pen-pal letter.

I write this letter to let people know that they are not alone. There are a lot of people in Federal & State prison who have many obstacles in their life. Like Charles from Wyoming, I too have Asperger's Syndrome. I have problems when relating to people in general whether in prison or on the outside. I do not get a lot of the jokes people tell that I am sure they are funny. I feel alone in a crowd, but feel welcome when I am with people like myself (unique). But unlike Charles, I also have Klinefelter Syndrome, which is a genetic disorder (depends on how you look at it) where I was born with an extra X-Chromosome. I was born male with female hips and mammary glands (breasts). Internally, I am both male and female. Whoever says that homosexuality/bisexuality is a choice is wrong. One in every 500 male children are born with this syndrome. I have to take testosterone for the rest of my life unless, I make a different choice I guess I see myself as gender-fluid.

With Asperger's Syndrome I get stuck on an idea for a long time. This is one of the things that has kept me busy most of my time. I am trying to redesign a five masted schooner (ship) and, in the process also start a Boat Building School. There are many obstacles, but I will overcome them. I have 3 years left in prison and I have given myself 10 years after that to finish my ship. There is more to it than just building it (a schooner), but I am still working on the specifics.

With the Klinefelter Syndrome, I keep exploring where I am in life and where I might fit in. If it wasn't for the Federal prison system I might not have gotten the medical treatment I needed, medical expenses are too much out there. Not saying I like being in prison, but since I am here, why not take advantage.

Let's talk about prison (at least for me). When I was sentenced to 15 years that threw me for a loop. I was originally looking at 7 to 9 years, I told myself that I could do that, but 15 years was a bit much. Being a SO (possession and transportation of CP) in the Federal prison is oddly not as bad. When I got to my first prison facility, I asked psychology for help - they were not able to help. After 18 months I was able to transfer to a facility that has a SOMP (Sex Offender Management Program) and that was helpful. Took 10 months and another 3.5 years of aftercare, then transferred to my last place to finish up treatment. There were some skills that I feel we're lacking, communication is the biggest one. While here is Mass., I was diagnosed with Skin Cancer (melanoma). They removed about 97% of the cancer cells and am feeling good.

My whole time in the last 10 years of prison have been normal. A couple shadow threats to my health but was able to walk all of the compounds. Had friends/associates with everyone from Black, Hispanic, white and everyone in between. From straight to queens, I seem to get along with everyone from every walk of life. How do I do this? I stay true to myself. Respect all who deserve it and stay away from those who don't. It is the same way I lived on the outside. What has prison done for me? Given me the time to self reflect on my life and what I want for my future. Allowed me to help those who were looking for someone to understand them. My being Pagan and my beliefs in being open-minded in all thing makes it easier to talk about anything.

What I don't like about the justice system is that they seem to be using a broad paint brush when it comes to sentencing individuals. There doesn't seem to be any sense at all. The whole justice system is broken and needs to be fixed. There should be alternatives to prisons in cases of non-violent crimes where treatment would be most beneficial. I can go on this longer, but this only my first letter.

This is also a letter for Robin in Texas and any others who are transgender. Well actually this is for everyone. No matter what a person looks or dresses like, they do not deserve to be taken advantage of. As I am writing this, I am getting emotional. I feel for everyone who has been misused. Even though I'm presently in Federal prison, and in the SOTP-R (Sex Offender Treatment Program - Residential), I want to help anyone who would like someone to write or talk to.

This is a publication where I feel I can share my and other issues without trouble. My family is supportive of my choices as long as they are good & proper choices. That includes religion, sexual orientation, dreams, and goals, and my future.

Sorry if this seems like it is all over the place, but this is how I think and talk.

Blessed Be to Thee;

Geoff, from NY and MA

What's up my new fam? My name is Nikki, AKA Skittlez, and I am a lesbian. I am locked up in Illinois. I'm 21 years old. A friend of mine introduced me to Black and pink just a couple months ago and reading others letters has really lifted my spirits.

I had a hard time coming out because my relatives always told me that being a lesbian was wrong. I tried not to accept the fact that I'm a lesbian, but I was always miserable. I came out to my relatives when I was 18 years old, when I first got arrested for armed robbery. They said I was going to hell. If that's true then at least I can be myself in hell than a phony in heaven.

I got released from prison, for armed robbery, August 22, 2013. I was back in prison by October, 2013. *Continued on Page 5...*

...Cont from Page 5...I'm now incarcerated for a forgery that I had nothing to do with. I was so tired of fighting and didn't want to sit in Cook County, that I pleaded out. I am supposed to leave October 8, 2014, but have gotten in some trouble so now the prison is trying to take 3 months from me.

I am having issues with police here because a lot of them don't like "boy-girls" or "studs." I don't consider myself either but I look like a boy because I have a short hair-cut. Even if I did consider myself a boy, it's wrong for the C/O's to treat anybody differently because of our appearance. But this is what we have to deal with at this facility.

As for the other inmates around me, it seems like every female is gay when the majority are just "gay-for-the-stay." Which, for me, sucks because I've met a woman here that I was with for a year and was hoping to be with forever... until she got out and went back to her boyfriend. I guess I'm just one of those hopeless romantics looking for love in all the wrong places. I just wish that if you're a straight woman who just wants to bust a nut in the joint... then why not just be honest about it?

Well that's all for now fam. Notice I recognize you all as my family and my blood as my relatives. Because blood makes you related and loyalty makes you family.

Love, Skittlez, IL

To Black and Pink, Submissions,

I am going to address the issue of prisoner abuse, harassment, torture, retaliation and discrimination that I, as a medically retired, senior prisoner am enduring at this extremely corrupt, family operated facility.

It is very hard for me to put the abuse into words. First off, I fear for my life 24/7, at the hand of the Alaska DOC employees of this facility, due to the manner in which they instigated the taking of a black gay man's life on June 29, of 2015. The murder was done through the use of an ex-lover of this prisoner, who of course has had the charge of murder totally dismissed. Amazing how that happens when you do a favor for the DOC, so they can sit back and gloat and wash their corrupt hands of the entire incident.

My life at this facility is totally threatened in the very same manner, by the very same AK DOC employees. It's just a matter of time. I'm in protective custody due to me filing complaints and grievances over the issue, but protective custody is just words, there is nothing protective about it, you're still in danger of the AK DOC, facility employees. I have asked for a transfer, which of course has been totally disregarded, because it would ruin their entertainment in someone taking my life, and the fact that it would be an admittance of wrongdoing by the AK DOC employees at this facility.

Wishing the best that can be had to the Black and Pink GLBTQ family. Stay strong.

From the AK DOC Segregation Torture Chambers,
Earl, AK

Dear Black and Pink Family and friends,

I am a thirty-seven year old, bi-sexual man from Detroit, MI. I have been in Prison for fifteen years. I read many of the letters from family in the newsletter. I believe that a person cannot hide how they really feel and who they really are. I don't see myself as being in the closet, but I am afraid of the world and of people's ignorance.

I was taught that a man is supposed to be with a woman so it is hard to admit that I have feelings for other men and am attracted to them mentally and physically. I have always been a macho, masculine figure and I tried to deny the fact that some feminine guys turn me on. I thought it would make me less of a man if I admitted that I had feelings for other guys, but now I know that a real man does not try to be something he is not. The point that I want every reader to understand is that being yourself is freedom, being trapped and afraid is keeping your mind locked up.

Due to the help of my lover, Jae, I now feel free. He helped me see that there is nothing wrong with being "Rob." I have been fighting with inmates in a battle I cannot win. Violence proves nothing and has severe consequences for everyone involved. As inmates we should be working together, not against each other.

Thanks family, for allowing me to speak freely and openly. Today, I am proud of who I am.

Peace & Love,
Rob, MI.

Dear Black & Pink Family,

How is the family doing? I know some of ya'll are doing good and I know there are some who are not doing good and others that live in a sort of hell. I am currently going through what seems like a thousands problems which just reassures me in a grim sort of way that the system of ODRC (Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction) and individual institutional administrations are very corrupt.

They have rules they are supposed to follow but don't and when told exactly what rules they disobeyed they lie and force me to take it all the way, exhaust every resource and wait years for a result. Ohio's legal system, prison, and the streets, are very corrupt. After reading March's issue of California prison I see some issues are like what we have. Our DRC system isn't as bad, but still faces the issue of mass incarceration and we also have three separate laws in effect for 'livers.' Which we refer to as "the old law," "The old, old law", and "the current law."

As for who I am, I am 27 years old, white, 6'1", about 185lbs, and I am bisexual, although my gender is confusing because I am attracted to feminine men. Reading the letters sent by different fam members helps a lot. When I've

been depressed or upset or feeling like I'm the only one they (staff) are playing, I read yall's letters and it helps me get back into the mindset of surviving inside this concrete tomb that they have unjustly over sentenced me to 42 to life, instead of killing myself. I have seen many LGBT members killed by staff and inmates, raped and robbed and put in the hospital by inmates because they wouldn't have sex with certain men or because they didn't have a "man". I have seen many foul things and I wish to convey their unheard and untold stories that they themselves are too afraid to tell.

When I first saw and read a copy of B&P from a friend, I thought the letters were pointless. But over the months of reading them I have come to realize the strength, wisdom, courage, importance, and understand the importance of it all. I have been locked up almost 8 years in Ohio's prison complex. Even though there is no solidarity in this state, only a few of us will stand up, which is considered unauthorized assembly and inciting a riot and a guaranteed ride to a level 4 max prison. I don't know how everyone feels or what B&P is allowed to publish (maybe do a survey?) but i would like to understand what people are doing in other states to solve problems we might have in this state and vice-versa.

In 2013, PREA was activated but it wasn't until 2014 that there were AR's (Administrative Rules & Regulations) in-stated for any sort of sexual abuse and transgender/intersex rights for hormone therapy, clothes such as bras & panties, and arched eyebrows. How LGBT's are treated varies from prison to prison. In most prisons the staff turn a blind eye, especially if you have a long sentence or life. They just don't like people jackin' on the female C/O's. Weird but it is how it is. It is largely the inmates that target men who favor female tendencies or actions sexually. Mainly due to the old ways of prison and the "new age" homosexuals coming in large numbers off of the streets who are changing the rules of prison dealing with homosexuality which is causing a clash. I've been locked up long enough to witness the change.

I'll end this letter on this note. Keep yall's heads, I know times will get hard and some think it isn't worth it, but somebody out there, even if you haven't met them yet, will love you. Loneliness is the hardest part of prison. So, will you die on your knees or standing up for yourself? Life sucks, since prison is now my life the suckiness will never cease.

Much clown love to the lo's and lette's out there! Much love to all my LGBT family, even the self-centered a**holes!

Luke, OH

Dear Black and Pink,

Thank you for your newspaper. It is a bright light in what is most often a very dark alley. My name is Michelle, and I'm a 74 year old female Transgender inmate on the Kansas KDOC. I have been fighting for Transgender rights in prison since 1970.

I have now served over 45 years in prison, and while I meet every criteria for parole, I was just passed for the 13th time in April for another 30 months. At this last parole hearing I had two mental health therapists who wanted to testify at my hearing with regard to my transsexual treatment, but the board refused to call them. Since I have been to parole hearings where the parole board would not even allow me to say the word "transsexual" I must assume this is a big part of the reason I'm denied parole.

I have recommendations from 3 doctors for transgender treatment and sex reassignment surgery. Still I have to fight for everything I get. I'm now allowed to wear female underwear (panties and sports bras) but nothing else. I have been on female hormone therapy and male hormone suppressors since June 2013, but the KDOC has kept me on such a low dosage that it has actually stunted my secondary sex development and breast development. I have just filed a PREA complaint trying to be transferred to the Women's Facility, and I'm working on a 42 USC 1983 Civil complaint. I will try to keep you informed.

Sincerely,
Michelle, KS

Editor's Note: In order to maintain Michelle's confidentiality, we have not included the case numbers of civil actions she has filed (which are among the first civil actions ever filed in Federal Court seeking treatment for Transgender inmates.) We don't print full names (or references to full names) so Newspapers don't get rejected. Keep up the fight Michelle!

B&P Family,

I agree 100% with what was said from our brother Wolfgang: "...there is always some way to bring your individuality to light." For many of our brothers and sisters, if not all of us, prison time can be a hard time. But I feel that any situation is what you make of it. If we look poorly on any of life's experiences, that is how it will affect us. Same as if we see things with joy or patience.

Norris said, "Where else can you be as free as by yourself in the middle of nowhere. Adventure is freedom." They can chain up our wrists and ankles, and they can throw us in a cage, but they can't take our free thinking. I choose to live free.

One more quote before I end: "Scars remind us where we've been. They don't have to dictate where we're going." - Timothy Leary

To all my brothers & sisters.
Regardless of who you are,
Merry Greet,
Merry Part,
And Merry Greet Again!
Timber, UT

DEEP IN MY LONGING

Many were the pains I have spent in my aloneness and long have been the nights and days of my suffering...

Too many fragments of my soul have I lost. A heart made sweet with longing and thirst...

The love that call all things unto her Beckons me and I will gladly embark...

The Queen of my passions and desires, my spirit cries out to you.

How often have you lived in my dreams to now appear in my awakening, which is my deepest dream???

Ready am I to embrace you, only another breath will I breath. Pray before you are with me. And then I shall love you more today than yesterday.

Who alone is peace and comfort to me. And what shall I give to you who is life itself to me.

Shall my heart become a true heavy laden with fruits, ones I shall gather and give to you abundantly.

And shall my true love flows like a fountain that may fill you cup of every needs, wants and desires.

A seeker of unconditional love am I, and what greater treasures have I found I my dreams of you that I embrace with great joy and happiness

If this be the day that your true unconditional love be given to me, I will not begrudging the time of place.

In my heart remain untouched for I, in words cannot speak the deepest secrets of my heart desires.... From my first beginning you have been in my heart and your presence has given me dreams to dream.

No stronger are you to me for you, as the missing half of my soul, are dearly beloved.

Let not the miles separate us, for the years that you have spent in my heart have built memories... before you have been with me in spirit and you have been a light to my every day. Much have I loved you but speechless was my love yet now it cries aloud to you and I would stand revealed before you.

Ever has it been that true love knows not its own depth until the hours of aloneness.

Charles, GA

WHO ARE WE

People look at me and see I'm 6'3" but they don't see my heart or my painted finger and feet.

The outside doesn't show what's on the Inside, but people just let me be.

You're straight, bi, or trans just please pick one is what they say.

But who I am is the same every day.

I am me the one and only for better or worse. People look at my lifestyle and call it a curse.

You preach compassion and understanding you say you love and care.

But if your son or daughter says they are gay, bi, or trans. You say it's too much to bear.

We live and breathe with one heart and mind. Brothers and sisters stand together and be one of a kind.

Who we are is what they want to be. We live our life open and free. Alone we might fall but together we will conquer them all.

So who we are is not what they want us to be.

We are you and you are me

Wayne, KY

A MESSAGE OF NOTE

We

Need to open up our eyes and

See

Deep down inside we are more like the

ones our "Homies" Despise

and yet we remain loyal to

gang colors Red or Blue

call it "keeping it real" and "staying true"

truth be told tho

would they still call you bro

if they knew knew the truth you know

probably call you a Hoe

a Queer, a punk

Say you suck dat Dick, even if you never sucked dat Dick

try and treat you like a "penitentiary Bitch"

no matter if you only "giving," maybe go "Both ways," or don't "receive"

would you still be openly received by your "G's"

your "B's"

your "C's"

probably only on the "down low" in the dark down low
on your knees

so we

fake the funk

just trying to get in where we feel we fit in
never really fitting in within how we're feeling
and so the struggle of concealing
trying to hide, what we feel inside
inside is only killing

us...

"All..."end (we are All "the community", our or D.L.)

Charlemagne, TX

SEEKING WRITING ABOUT PRISON RESISTANCE BY WOMEN, TRANS* PEOPLE, AND GENDER-NONCONFORMING FOLKS FOR PRISON ACTION NEWS VOLUME 9, ISSUE 1, FEBRUARY 2016!

Prison Action News is a newsletter for prisoners worldwide to report on their struggles and acts of resistance from behind bars. Our next issue will be a special issue, featuring only writings by women, trans* people, and gender-nonconforming folks. These are voices that we wish we saw more in every issue of PAN, and in order to raise them up, we are dedicating the next issue entirely to their stories of resistance. If submitting to the issue, please identify yourself in a note to PAN as one of the above identities. Any articles submitted that are not clearly written by people identifying as the above will be held until the following issue.

Please send ALL SUBMISSIONS, SUBSCRIPTION REQUESTS and ADDRESS CHANGES by JANUARY 1, 2016 to:

Prison Action News
PO Box 832
Watertown, MA 02472
prisonactionnews@riseup.net

Guidelines

1. A submission must not exceed 500 words.
2. We will not accept submissions with racist, sexist, homophobic, or otherwise oppressive language.
3. An update may be a report on resistance activities of individual prisoners or prison groups (this can include, but is not limited to, radical book groups, hunger strike, general strike, letter writing campaigns, etc.).
4. A report should not be a political essay or a report on prison conditions, rather, the response and resistance to these conditions.
5. PAN accepts entries of artwork and illustrations.
6. One submission per group, per prison, per newsletter.
7. We will not report on gang activity.
8. We accept bilingual entries (when one language is English), as well as Spanish entries! Aceptamos la escritura en español.
9. Entries may be submitted for publication by prison groups and organizations, or individuals, and may be submitted for publication with the name and contact information of the writer, or anonymously, to protect their identity.

SUBMIT HOLIDAY CARD ART!

Every year Black and Pink hosts holiday card writing parties to send holiday cards from people outside to you. A lot of the art on the cards come from your drawings, and this year we are hoping for more art! Please send your holiday themed drawings to:

BLACK AND PINK - HOLIDAY ART
614 Columbia Road
Dorchester MA 02125

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS TO HOT PINK!

Seeking erotic short stories, poems, AND ART by Black & Pink incarcerated and free-world family members for a new 'zine. To be mailed, art cannot include full nudity. Please send submissions (and shout outs to the authors from the first issue mailed in January!) addressed to Black & Pink - HOT PINK. This is a voluntary project, and no money will be offered for submissions, but you might get the chance to share your spicy story with many others! The zine will be sent 1-2 times per year. To subscribe to receive a copy of HOT PINK twice a year, write to our address, Black & Pink - GENERAL.

PENNSYLVANIA PRISONS OVERHAUL POLICIES FOR TRANSGENDER PRISONERS

Over the last few months, unusual missives began arriving in the post office box of the Hearts on a Wire Collective, a grassroots collaboration between transgender people who meet weekly at the William Way LGBT Community Center in Philadelphia and transgender prison inmates around the state.

"We started getting letters from folks on the inside saying, 'I just had this bizarre conversation I never expected to have,'" said Adrian Lowe, one of the organizers. "People were saying, 'They just asked me if I needed a bra! I'm so excited!' Or, 'I ordered lipstick, and I didn't get sent to the hole!'"

For transgender women housed in men's prisons around Pennsylvania - a small but deeply vulnerable group, including those who say they've been sexually harassed, assaulted, and raped while in state custody - the rules have quietly changed.

In a series of policy updates to bring the state into compliance with the federal Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA), the state in June created new commissary lists to allow transgender inmates to buy things like makeup and barrettes or gender-appropriate underwear, and rescinded its policy prohibiting sex-reassignment surgery for inmates. And this month, it instituted a new assessment process to determine where transgender inmates should be housed.

Any reforms would be an improvement, said John Hargreaves, director of volunteers for the Pennsylvania Prison Society, who has heard from transgender inmates fearful for their safety.

"They're obvious targets," he said. "They're singled out for being a distinct population." There are 137 transgender people in the Pennsylvania prisons. Of those, 14 transgender men are housed in women's prisons; the policy updates also apply to them.

Currently, all inmates are housed in facilities that correspond to their genders assigned at birth, said Shirley Moore Smeal, executive deputy secretary of corrections.

The only option to be separated from the general population would appear to be solitary confinement, known as the Restricted Housing Unit, Hargreaves said. "RHU is not the best place to be. And that's their option now."

The state's updated Prison Rape Elimination Act policy states that administrators will consider "whether a placement would ensure the resident's health and safety, and whether the placement would present management or security problems." Gender-variant inmates could not be forced into solitary confinement solely because of their gender. And whether the inmates believed they were in danger should be given "serious consideration."

Also under the new policy, transgender inmates must be allowed to shower separately; currently, some older prisons in the state still have communal showers.

Smeal said the new policy might not result in any transgender inmates' being relocated.

"I wouldn't say [anyone is] likely to be moved," she said. "I would say, based on their risk-assessment tool and the interview that was done, they are where we believe they should be."

She added that she was not aware of any transgender inmates currently in isolated "administrative custody" for protective reasons (although inmates can also be sent to RHU for disciplinary purposes).

Still, Valerie Burton of Southwest Philadelphia said her daughter, Niara, born Herman Burton, had spent much of her prison term in the RHU. Niara has long taken hormones and has a feminine appearance; she says she has been raped and beaten in the state prison.

She had been a prostitute, and she pleaded guilty in a grisly 2010 murder and arson. But Valerie Burton said that didn't cancel out the state's responsibility to protect Niara in custody.

"I'm scared I'm going to get a call my child is dead," she said. "My understanding is they're supposed to take care of her."

Angus Love, executive director of the Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project, said his nonprofit was working on two cases in which transgender inmates in Pennsylvania were allegedly abused by male guards and inmates.

In one, he said, a transgender woman was forced to walk around naked and was later sexually assaulted.

Pennsylvania is behind the curve on this issue, he said, but the policy updates represent an important step.

"Generally, the trends are going toward recognizing this as a legitimate issue," Love said. "The acknowledgment that PREA covers transgenders is a step in the right direction."

Prisons and jails across the country have likewise been wrangling with how to manage transgender inmates.

San Francisco announced in September that its county jails would house inmates based on gender.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Department of Justice weighed in to support a lawsuit by a transgender inmate in Georgia who said the state had acted illegally in denying her hormone treatments.

Lowe, of Hearts on a Wire, said just being able to access gender-appropriate items in a commissary felt like a victory.

But when it comes to housing, he said, "we don't know how this is going to play out."

Smeal said the department had consulted with experts and was taking policy reforms seriously.

But, she added, "we've always, through the intake process, determined the needs of the offender and tried to meet those needs."

By Samantha Melamed, originally published on Philly.com, Sep 23, 2015

SANFRANCISCOTOHOUSEINMATESACCORDING TO GENDER IDENTITY

San Francisco county jails will become some of the first in the nation to house inmates according to their gender identity, the sheriff's department announced this week. In many facilities, transgender people are housed according to their sex assigned at birth, while in San Francisco transgender people are housed in a special unit isolated from other inmates. In a press release, the department described the move as "a major show of commitment to recognizing and respecting all people's gender identities."

In the first phase, transgender women currently housed in a men's detention facility will be allowed to participate in programming at a women's prison, like women's empowerment groups and education about drug and alcohol abuse. The department plans to eventually offer them the option to be housed there, and vice versa for transgender men.

Transgender women face a much higher risk of sexual assault when housed in men's prisons. Attempts to protect them often involve long-term isolation, sometimes for up to 23 hours a day. "What they do is put people in solitary confinement, which is torture," said Mara Keisling, executive director of the National Center for Transgender Equality. "It's meant generally to keep other people safe from the person and not the other way around." Advocates say this often causes psychological trauma and that such "neglect" can lead to high rates of recidivism. In the case of jails like San Francisco, advocates say that isolating them in groups can make them easier targets for harassment or verbal abuse.

LGBT rights groups that have worked for years with the San Francisco sheriff's department were guarded about their praise. "Unfortunately, while this policy addresses the need of transgender inmates to have equal access to programming," said Flor Bermudez of the Transgender Law Center, "it does not offer an adequate solution to the dramatically increased risk of sexual assault transgender women in prison face." She said she applauds the notion of changing housing policies but has yet to see any concrete proposal describing how it will work, with key details like intake procedures, as well as who will be evaluating inmates and how.

Bermudez and other advocates dedicated to reforming detention policy have sought for transgender people to be housed on a case-by-case basis, ultimately placing them wherever they feel safest. Some transgender men, for instance, might feel safer in a women's prison. Transgender people come to jail in varying states of transition, Bermudez said, which might cause them to prefer one facility or the other. "Transgender people are different and the risk for one is different than another and their sense of safety is different," she said.

Though statistics are hard to come by, given that booking processes generally do not involve cataloging gender identity, experts say transgender people tend to be incarcerated at higher rates than the general population. Surveys have found that they experience discrimination, poverty and homelessness at much higher than average rates, which are all risk factors.

In most states, there is no law that forbids firing someone or denying them housing based on their gender identity (though advocates are fighting to pass

Continued on Page 8...

...Continued from Page 7... a federal non-discrimination law that would cover these areas). "Their level of economic fluency is really small," Bermudez said, "so many of them have engaged in survival crimes," which may involve sex work or involvement with drugs.

In its statement, the sheriff's department acknowledged transgender people's disadvantaged status in society. "Since the transgender population is marginalized on the streets of America, consider how that marginalization is magnified inside prisons and jails," San Francisco Sheriff Ross Mirkarimi said upon announcing the policy shift. "This is a reality we want to change for our San Francisco jails—and hopefully beyond."

By Katy Steinmetz originally published on Time Magazine. Sept. 11, 2015

CHELSEA E. MANNING | TRANSPHOBIA AT THE INTERSECTION OF THE MILITARY AND PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEXES

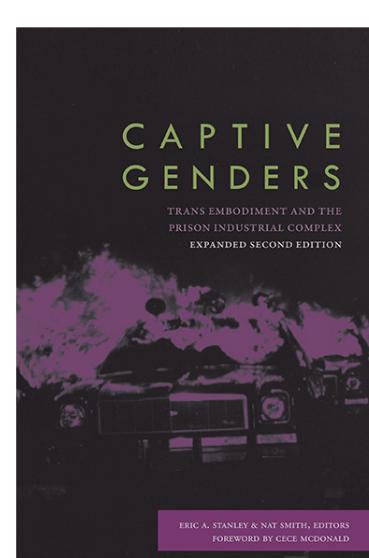
My home - or, at least my place of residence for the time being - is the US Disciplinary Barracks, the United States' crown jewel military prison. Being both a military institution and a prison, it lies in a unique, though not necessarily uncommon, intersection of two of the world's largest institutional ecosystems: the military-industrial complex and the prison industrial complex.

My status as a trans woman in a military prison places me in the unique position in which the extraordinary administration, regulation, surveillance and policing of gender norms, expectations, vices and virtues clash with my most fundamental understanding of my identity and how I intend to express myself as a female. For instance, although I am now being allowed to wear female undergarments, use cosmetics and take hormones, I am not allowed to grow my hair beyond the two inches authorized by the military.



The purpose and intent of the military-industrial and prison industrial complexes are very similar. While both systems often appear to be functioning separately, there are more and more instances where they operate in unison. This is especially the case in our post-9/11 world, in which these frameworks and structures overlap and operate together in many places. Such overlaps between them can now determine how individuals and groups that society labels as "criminal" can now be labeled as enemies or terrorists and become classified as threats to national security.

Both systems impact women and other gender and sexual minorities - the imposition of strict gender norms of femininity on women, and the praise of masculinity and the macho at the expense of femininity, which is deemed a sign of "weakness." Both systems impact immigrants through the criminalization of those who are read as "unfamiliar." The military-industrial complex also targets people read as "foreigners" by labeling them as potential terrorists and threats to national security. Both systems impact people living in poverty through the criminalization of low-income people.



It is at the intersection of these two systems that trans women such as me are placed into the exhausting and dehumanizing position of being determined as a potential criminal, named as a threat to national security and deemed as immutably male.

When I was a homeless teenager in 2006, trying to survive in the Midwest and on the streets of Chicago, I was left to fend for myself against both systems. The prison industrial complex had the power to imprison me and label me as an offender for life, for crimes as small and victimless as loitering in public areas, trespassing in private parking areas and being suspected of solicitation for prostitution. The reality, from my perspective, was clear: that I had nowhere not to loiter or trespass, and that my perceived sexual orientation, living as an effeminate gay male at the time, allowed law enforcement officials to assume that I was a prostitute.

Later, in 2007, when I attempted to start a career and obtain a degree from college, the military-industrial complex tempted me with large bonuses and financial assistance. By enlisting for a four-year term as an intelligence analyst, I would also receive training with certification and tuition assistance, and receive more pay - without paying for taxes - for deploying to Iraq or Afghanistan. Yet, despite my certain sexual orientation and uncertain gender identity, I placed myself into a structure of strict sexual and gender norms and expectations, compounded by the "don't ask, don't tell" law still in effect.

In the 2009-10 timeframe, when I eventually did deploy to Iraq, I saw firsthand

how the military places people like me and my fellow soldiers into some of the most burdensome positions in the intelligence community, with most of us making less than a fourth or a fifth of the pay earned by civilian counterparts while enduring long work days with no time off.

From the start of 2010 to our current moment (2015), I have continued to have my gender enforced and regulated (to varying degrees) as being forever and immutably male underneath the somewhat mild and cosmetic relaxations of the "male" standards imposed on military prisoners. And, this has been primarily the result of two years of public pressure and litigation to compel the military and the US secretary of defense to provide for accommodations as recommended by medical and mental health professionals and the World Professional Association for Transgender Health standards of care. Thus far successes have been slow and, ultimately, unnecessary.

How do we begin to roll back the widespread effects of these two (continually expanding) industrial complexes? One thing we can do is identify what the institutions are and who the interested parties behind them are. We can identify the scope and range of the institutions driving the industrial complexes. We can identify what the general objectives of the parties identified are, and what specific objectives each component to them has to meet the general objective.

Through educating each other and ourselves, we can fill in the gaps in our understanding of the world around us. We can inventory all the things that we know from our experience, and find out what we don't know or understand. But, this is only the first step. From here, we can use our improved understanding of how each institution works to identify its weaknesses and vulnerabilities. These are going to be dependent upon the context in which the specific institution operates. For instance, a private corporation is going to have different vulnerabilities than a public department or agency does. We must also communicate with each other, sharing knowledge, experience, ideas and criticisms with each other. Through this kind of communication, which institutions naturally and reflexively attempt to stifle, we can help to minimize the scale and effect of the military and prison industrial complexes in our lives.

Note: This article is an adaptation of excerpts from "On the Intersection of the Military and the Prison Industrial Complex," Chelsea Manning's contribution to the new edition of Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex, which will be released from AK Press this October.

By Chelsea Manning originally published on Truth-Out. Sept 13, 2015.

CA PRISONERS WIN HISTORIC GAINS WITH SETTLEMENT AGAINST SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

Agreement reached in Ashker v. Brown, end to indeterminate long-term solitary confinement in CA among the gains for prisoners

Oakland — Today, California prisoners locked in isolation achieved a groundbreaking legal victory in their ongoing struggle against the use of solitary confinement. A settlement was reached in the federal class action suit Ashker v. Brown, originally filed in 2012, effectively ending indefinite long-term solitary confinement, and greatly limiting the prison administration's ability to use the practice, widely seen as a form of torture. The lawsuit was brought on behalf of prisoners held in Pelican Bay State Prison's infamous Security Housing Units (SHU) for more than 10 years, where they spend 23 hours a day or more in their cells with little to no access to family visits, outdoor time, or any kind of programming.

"From the historic prisoner-led hunger strikes of 2011 and 2013, to the work of families, loved ones, and advocates, this settlement is a direct result of our grassroots organizing, both inside and outside prison walls," said Dolores Canales of California Families Against Solitary Confinement (CFASC), and mother of a prisoner in Pelican Bay. "This legal victory is huge, but is not the end of our fight — it will only make the struggle against solitary and imprisonment everywhere stronger." The 2011 and 2013 hunger strikes gained widespread international attention that for the first time in recent years put solitary confinement under mainstream scrutiny.

Currently, many prisoners are in solitary because of their "status" — having been associated with political ideologies or gang affiliation. However, this settlement does away with the status-based system, leaving solitary as an option only in cases of serious behavioral rule violations. Furthermore, the settlement limits the amount of time a prisoner may be held in solitary, and sets a two year Step-Down Program for the release of current solitary prisoners into the general population.

It is estimated that between 1,500 and 2,000 prisoners will be released from SHU within one year of this settlement. A higher security general population unit will be created for a small number of cases where people have been in SHU for more than 10 years and have a recent serious rule violation.

"Despite the repeated attempts by the prison regime to break the prisoners' strength, they have remained unified in this fight," said Marie Levin of CFASC

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...Continued from Page 8...and sister of a prisoner representative named in the lawsuit. "The Agreement to End Hostilities and the unity of the prisoners are crucial to this victory, and will continue to play a significant role in their ongoing struggle." The Agreement to End Hostilities is an historic document put out by prisoner representatives in Pelican Bay in 2012 calling on all prisoners to build unity and cease hostilities between racial groups.

Prisoner representatives and their legal counsel will regularly meet with California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation officials as well as with Federal Magistrate Judge Nandor Vadas, who is tasked with overseeing the reforms, to insure that the settlement terms are being implemented.

"Without the hunger strikes and without the Agreement to End Hostilities to bring California's prisoners together and commit to risking their lives--- by being willing to die for their cause by starving for 60 days, we would not have this settlement today," said Anne Weills of Siegel and Yee, co-counsel in the case. "It will improve the living conditions for thousands of men and women and no longer have them languishing for decades in the hole at PB.

"This victory was achieved by the efforts of people in prison, their families and loved ones, lawyers, and outside supporters," said the prisoners represented in the settlement in a joint statement. "We celebrate this victory while at the same time, we recognize that achieving our goal of fundamentally transforming the criminal justice system and stopping the practice of warehousing people in prison will be a protracted struggle."

Legal co-counsel in the case includes California Prison Focus, Siegel & Yee, Legal Services for Prisoners with Children, Weil Gotshal & Manges LLP, Chistensen O'Connor Johnson Kindness PLLC, and the Law Offices of Charles Carbone. The lead counsel is the Center for Constitutional Rights. The judge in the case is Judge Claudia Wilken in the United States District Court for the Northern District of California.

Press Release by Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity Coalition on Sept. 1, 2015

SUMMARY OF ASHKER V. GOVERNOR OF CALIFORNIA SETTLEMENT TERMS

When Ashker v. Governor was first filed as a class action in 2012, thousands of prisoners across the state of California languished in prolonged solitary confinement in Security Housing Units (SHU). At Pelican Bay State Prison alone, more than 500 prisoners had been held in the SHU for over 10 years, and 78 prisoners had been there for more than 20 years. They were warehoused in cramped, windowless concrete cells for almost 24 hours a day with no phone calls, infrequent visits through plexiglass preventing physical contact, meager rehabilitative opportunities, and no opportunity for normal social interaction with other prisoners. Their indefinite and prolonged confinement in this torturous isolation was based not on any actual misconduct but on vague and tenuous allegations of affiliation with a gang. Prisoners were routinely placed in prolonged solitary confinement for simply appearing on a list of gang members found in another prisoner's cell, or possessing allegedly gang-related artwork and tattoos.

In 2015, the plaintiffs agreed to a far-reaching settlement that fundamentally alters all aspects of this cruel and unconstitutional regime. The agreement will dramatically reduce the current solitary confinement population and should have a lasting impact on the population going forward; end the practice of isolating prisoners who have not violated prison rules; cap the length of time a prisoner can spend in solitary confinement at Pelican Bay; and provide a restrictive but not isolating alternative for the minority of prisoners who continue to violate prison rules on behalf of a gang.

1. The settlement transforms California's use of solitary confinement from a status-based system to a behavior-based system.

Under California's old regime, prisoners identified as gang affiliates were sent to SHU for an indefinite term based merely on their gang affiliation,

regardless of whether they had ever violated a prison rule. The settlement transforms California's use of solitary confinement from a status-based system to a behavior-based system: from now on, California will only send gang-validated prisoners to SHU if they are found guilty, at a hearing, of a serious "SHU-eligible" rule violation. These violations are now limited to the same violations that send non-gang-validated prisoners to the SHU: murder, violence against persons, threats to kill or assault, weapons possession, distribution of controlled substances, escape, disturbance, riot or strike, harassment, gang activity that leads to a serious rule violation, serious theft or destruction of property, extortion or bribery, certain sexual misconduct, and related attempts or conspiracy.

2. Validated gang affiliates who are found guilty of a SHU-eligible offense will enter a quicker two-year SHU step-down program for return to general population after serving their determinate SHU term.

Prisoners validated as gang affiliates in California used to face indefinite SHU confinement, with a review for possible release to general population only once every six years. Even when such reviews occurred, a single piece of evidence of alleged continued gang affiliation led to another six years of solitary confinement. That evidence was often as problematic as the original evidence used to send them to SHU – for example, a book, a poem, or a tattoo that was deemed to be gang-related. As a result, California held more people in solitary confinement, for longer periods of time, than any other state in the country.

Under the settlement, California will no longer impose indeterminate SHU sentences. Instead, after serving a determinate sentence for a SHU-eligible offense, validated gang affiliates whose offense was proven to be related to gang activities will be transferred to a two-year, four-step program. Prisoners will definitely be released to a general population prison setting after two years unless they commit another SHU-eligible offense while in the step-down program. While conditions at the steps remain harsh, prisoners will be allowed some telephone calls and rehabilitative programming at each step.

This new step-down program improves upon interim reforms unilaterally promulgated by the state after the Ashker complaint was filed. It cuts in half the time in the program from four to two years; provides increased phone calls, other privileges, and out-of-cell programming in the steps; and eliminates prisoners being kept in the SHU for either minor infractions or failure to engage in required behavioral programming.

Under this settlement, those prisoners who have refused to participate in step-down programming, or who have been found guilty of numerous acts of misconduct that don't rise to the level of a SHU-eligible offense, will be transferred to a new unit established as an alternative to solitary: a Restricted Custody General Population Unit (RCGP). In this unit, described below, they will have the opportunity to complete the step-down program in a high-security but non-solitary unit, and earn release into general population.

3. California will review all current gang-validated SHU prisoners within one year to determine whether they should be released from solitary under the settlement terms. It is estimated by CDCR that the vast majority of such prisoners will be released to general population. In addition, virtually all of those prisoners who have spent more than 10 years in solitary will be immediately released to a general-population setting, even if they have committed recent serious misconduct.

The settlement requires speedy review of all prisoners currently held in a California SHU based on gang affiliation. With very limited exceptions, described below, those who have not been found guilty of a SHU-eligible offense within the last two years will be immediately released to a general-population unit. Those with a recent SHU-eligible offense will be placed at the appropriate step of the step-down program, based on the date of the rule violation. It is currently estimated that only a small minority of those currently held in a SHU based on gang affiliation have a recent SHU-eligible offense, so that the overwhelming majority of prisoners should be released into general population under this settlement.

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BLACK & PINK INCARCERATED FAMILY FEEDBACK! MAIL TO: Black & Pink - FEEDBACK

rip slip here

Black & Pink is working on rethinking our membership and leadership structure as we prepare to become a non-profit and as we grow to a national organization with chapters all across the United States. Moving forward we also want to think about how best to involve our incarcerated family in leadership decisions. We are also thinking about organizing leadership groups based on themes. One group might focus on the newspaper, another might work on advocacy, and more. We also want to think more about what we use this feedback form for. This is a lot to think about! Please share your thoughts and ideas on: 1). How we can best include our incarcerated family in decision making. 2). Your opinion on "theme leadership groups" and 3). What types of questions you'd like on the feedback slip. Or other thoughts and ideas you have on Black and Pink's strcuture.

...Continued from Page 9...In addition, California has implicitly recognized the harm to prisoners from very prolonged solitary confinement by agreeing that those prisoners who have already spent 10 or more continuous years in the SHU will generally be immediately released from the SHU and placed in the RCGP to complete the step-down program – even if they have been found guilty of, or are still serving a sentence for, a recent gang-related SHU offense. Nor will anyone be involuntarily held in the Pelican Bay SHU for longer than five years for any reason. Even those prisoners who have been incarcerated in the SHU for more than 10 years and are currently serving a determinate SHU sentence for serious misconduct will be released to the RCGP to complete their SHU sentence and the step-down program unless California can show by a preponderance of the evidence that to do so would pose an unreasonable security risk.

4. California will create a new Restricted Custody General Population Unit (RCGP) as a secure alternative to solitary confinement.

The RCGP is a general-population unit designed to facilitate positive and meaningful social interactions for prisoners about whom California has serious security concerns, such that they would otherwise be placed in solitary confinement. As such, it may serve as a model for jurisdictions seeking to do away with solitary confinement altogether, while still ensuring prison security. As part of a general-population unit, RCGP prisoners will be allowed to move around the unit without restraints, will be afforded as much out-of-cell time as other general-population prisoners, and will be able to receive contact visits. As a very high-security, restrictive-custody unit, its group activities will generally be in small groups, instead of large yards. For example, RCGP prisoners will have access to educational courses, a small-group recreation yard, small-group leisure activities and programming, some job opportunities and phone calls. Programming will be designed to provide increased opportunities for positive social interaction with both other prisoners and staff.

Three categories of prisoners will be sent to the RCGP: first, those who repeatedly violate prison rules while in the step-down program or refuse to take part in step-down programming; second, those who have spent over 10 continuous years in some form of solitary confinement and have recently committed a SHU-eligible offense; and third, prisoners against whom there is a substantial threat to their personal safety that limits their ability to be released into other general-population units.

5. Very prolonged solitary confinement will be severely limited and those confined provided significantly more out-of-cell time.

Because this settlement ends the prior practice of indeterminate SHU sentences for validated prisoners, generally prisoners will not be kept in the SHU for more than 10 continuous years, with a limited exception, called Administrative SHU. The settlement limits and ameliorates such prolonged solitary confinement by (a) setting up strict criteria for its use, (b) requiring increased out-of-cell time, and (c) providing for strong judicial review of its use. For example, where the Departmental Review Board has overwhelming evidence that a prisoner who has already served a SHU term presents an immediate threat such that he cannot be placed in general population, he can be kept in the SHU. Even in such instances, CDCR shall provide enhanced out-of-cell recreation and programming of a combined total of 20 hours per week, double the out-of-cell time of other SHU prisoners. During the agreement, CDCR's decision is subject to review by Magistrate Judge Vadas, who is monitoring implementation of the settlement with plaintiffs' counsel. The agreement states that CDCR's expectation is that only a small number of prisoners will be retained in Administrative SHU. The Administrative SHU prisoners will have 180-day reviews in which staff will be required to identify efforts to move the prisoner to a less restrictive environment with the assumption being that these prisoners would be candidates to be moved to the RCGP.

In addition, no prisoner may be held involuntarily at Pelican Bay SHU for more than 5 years.

6. Prisoner representatives will work with plaintiffs' counsel and the magistrate judge to monitor implementation of the settlement.

The struggle to reform California's use of solitary confinement has always been a prisoner-led movement. Indeed, the settlement was negotiated with the active participation of the prisoner representatives, who met as a group several times with counsel via conference phone calls, and who ultimately decided as a group to ratify the agreement. Under this settlement, prisoner representatives will retain their hard-won seat at the table to regularly meet with California prison officials to review the progress of the settlement, discuss programming and step-down program improvements, and monitor prison conditions. Plaintiffs' counsel will receive regular documentation of all administrative-SHU and step-down placements, progress, and SHU-eligible rule violations. Along with Magistrate Judge Vadas, plaintiffs' counsel will monitor all aspects of the settlement implementation. Magistrate Judge Vadas will be empowered to review and remedy any individual or systemic violations of the agreement. In addition, the settlement continues the ability of the prisoner representatives from around the state to confer as a group in a conference call with counsel to discuss the implementation and monitoring of the agreement.

The settlement also requires re-training of California correctional staff, and prohibits any retaliation for prisoners' past and future involvement in the litigation or settlement monitoring.

The monitoring process under the settlement will be in effect for 24 months, with the opportunity to seek additional 12-month extensions upon a showing of continuing constitutional violations.

CONGRESS SET TO INTRODUCE GROUNDBREAKING CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM BILLS

House and Senate leaders from both parties are this month to introduce a major criminal justice reform bill—just as independent Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont prepares to introduce his own bill. The bipartisan is expected to focus on reducing draconian mandatory minimum sentences and strengthening re-entry programs for prisoners returning to the community. Sanders's bill would abolish privately-run jails and prisons, revive the federal parole program, and end the “bed quota” in immigration detention.

The National Center for Transgender Equality lauds the Sanders bill with Executive Director Mara Keisling stating: “Though it would likely not see passage in this Congress, this bill represents a principled stand against America's crumbling criminal justice system. By stopping the practice of profiting off of prisoners, this bill helps restore respect and dignity to all people behind bars.”

Within two years, Sanders's would end all contracts for privately run local, state and federal prisons and immigration detention centers, eliminate the current rule requiring that a mandatory minimum number of immigrants be detained at all times, and require Immigration and Customs Enforcement to improve monitoring of detention facilities. The legislation will also end private companies' overcharging of prisoners for services while incarcerated, increasing oversight, and reinstating the federal parole system.

Jails, prisons, and immigration detention centers are inherently unsafe places for transgender people. Their placement in these facilities make them targets of sexual assault. And often, transgender people are forced into isolation simply because of who they are. Because of bias in policing and the unfair targeting of sex workers, transgender people of color are more likely than most to interact with the criminal justice system.

“Reforming these systems for transgender people means resolving problems in policing that disproportionately traps transgender people in jails, prisons, and immigration detention, while also improving the conditions in these facilities,” said Keisling.”

Meanwhile Senate Judiciary Chairman Chuck Grassley, Minority Whip Dick Durbin, and Utah Senator Mike Lee are said to be close to introducing a bipartisan bill focused on federal sentencing reform and reentry.

Throughout the summer the House Judiciary Committee has also been working on a bipartisan criminal justice reform initiative. Representatives Bob Goodlatte and John Conyers are expected to introduce a criminal justice reform bill in the House this month. The House Judiciary Committee, which reviews all new federal criminal laws, began the initiative in June with a listening session where they heard from a number of Members of Congress on criminal justice reform issues. The resulting bill is said to focus on issues including over-criminalization, sentencing reform, prison and reentry reform, protecting citizens through improved criminal procedures and policing strategies, and civil asset forfeiture reform. A number of other proposals are being discussed on Capitol Hill, including the bipartisan Fair Chance Act introduced last week by Reps. Elijah Cummings and Darrell Issa and Sens. Cory Booker and Ron Jonson, which would limit questions about criminal records in federal hiring to only being asked after a conditional job offer is made. Advocates have called on President Obama to sign an executive order adopting this “Ban the Box” policy, so called for the “box” on job applications asking about criminal record.

NCTE and other advocates continue to work to create new tools for advocacy focused on protecting transgender and gender non-conforming people at every level of the criminal justice system, including interactions with local, state and federal law enforcement officials and with the public at-large.

By National Center for Transgender Equality originally published on NCTE's blog Sept. 17, 2015.

ATTICA UPRISING: ANNIVERSARY OF STATE-SPONSORED MURDER, PRISONERS' REVOLUTIONARY LEADERSHIP

On 13 September 1971, 39 people – 29 prisoners and 10 guards – were killed by bullets shot by the State of New York, fired from State Police guns, murdered by the state in order to suppress the Attica Revolt, the prisoners' upsurge in New York in the United States.

The Attica Revolt of 1971 came amid escalating prison organizing and US government repression, as the Black Liberation movement grew throughout the United States and disproportionately Black prisoners – alongside revolutionary prisoners of all national and racial identities – organized against the racist oppression inside US prisons.

The Attica Revolt was sparked after the unjust and repressive segregation/isolation of two prisoners, after decades of injustice inside the prison. From 9 to 13 September 1971, the prisoners took control of Attica prison, holding 40 hostages and making a series of demands for changed conditions inside the prison; on 13 September, the state's bloody attack shot the rebellion down.

The Attica Revolt came out of ongoing demands by the Attica Liberation Faction, whose five founders, Frank Lott, Herbert X. Blyden, Carl Jones-EL, Donald Noble and Peter Butler, were activists and revolutionaries. "We started teaching political ideology to ourselves. We read Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Malcolm X, du Bois, Frederick Douglass and a lot of others. We tried a reform program on ourselves first before we started making petitions and so forth. We would hold political classes on weekends and point out that certain conditions were taking place and the money that was being made even though we weren't getting the benefits," wrote Carl Jones-EL.

They worked to provide political education to their fellow prisoners as well as addressing demands for reform and changed conditions to the state.

Today, the United States continues – as it has for centuries – its racist mass incarceration, particularly targeting Black and other oppressed communities, as it continues its imperial war on the peoples of the world, felt brutally in Palestine where the Zionist state is a key strategic partner of US imperialism.

The Attica prisoners' Declaration echoes today as a call from the oppressed and systematically incarcerated as a means of colonial, economic and racial domination and control, from the United States to Palestine:

"The entire prison populace, that means each and every one of us here, have set forth to change forever the ruthless brutalization and disregard for the lives of the prisoners here and throughout the United States. What has happened here is but the sound before the fury of those who are oppressed. We will not compromise on any terms except those terms that are agreeable to us. We've called upon all the conscientious citizens of America to assist us in putting an end to this situation that threatens the lives of not only us, but of each and every one of you, as well. We have set forth demands that will bring us closer to the reality of the demise of these prison institutions that serve no useful purpose to the people...but to those who would enslave and exploit the people."

Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network on salutes the valiant prisoners who struggled not only in Attica, but in countless prisons then and now for revolutionary change and radical action, for freedom and liberation, and mourns the victims of state-sponsored mass murder. We echo the demands of the prisoners of Attica, of the prisoners of Palestine, who turned the cells of the oppressor into revolutionary schools for struggle, and who continue to do so today, educating and leading movements to end racist, colonialist, capitalist and imperialist oppression and exploitation.

By Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network on Sept. 13, 2015.

ANTI-RACIST ORGANIZERS WIN AS SEATTLE COUNCIL VOTES TO END YOUTH INCARCERATION

After a three-year crusade of protest, agitation, and organizing, a Seattle City Council meeting on September 21 brought a major victory to a diverse coalition of youth-prison abolitionists and anti-racist organizers.

In a 9-0 unanimous decision, Seattle's City Council passed a resolution that fully endorses the goal of zero-percent detention of youth, and called for the city to develop policies eliminating the necessity of their imprisonment.

While Council Member Mike O'Brien introduced the resolution in a committee meeting last week, it originated with three organizations that advocate for the abolition of juvenile incarceration: Ending the Prison Industrial Complex (EPIC), Youth Undoing Institutional Racism (YUIR), and the Seattle branch of the anti-racist organization European Dissent.

"We wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for the youth activists," said Council Member Nick Licata prior to the resolution's passage. "They're the ones who created the huge pressure on the county and also the city."

Seattle's movement for ending youth incarceration picked up speed after the same city council in 2012 voted overwhelmingly (8-1, with only Kshama Sawant opposed) to fund the replacement of an existing youth detention facility with a new one. What struck organizers at that time was the \$210 million poured into the facility.

"I was here the day all except Council Member Sawant voted to build a youth jail with \$200 million of our tax money," asserted white anti-racist organizer James Kahn, addressing the city council. "The movement did not stop after those defeats. The movement could not stop or end until we stop putting children in cages."

African Americans make up about 8 percent of Seattle's population, yet account for more than 50 percent of the city's incarcerated adolescents on any given night, according to a letter by King County Executive Dow Constantine.

Organizers drummed up support not just against the prison, but also toward ending juvenile imprisonment anywhere in the 206 area code by knocking on doors, frequenting city council hearings, and speaking out at community meetings.

Besides pushing for a moratorium on juvenile incarceration, the resolution also calls for the city to fund community-based organizations that are already engaged in anti-racist work and have been working to eliminate youth detention. The amount of funding was not specified.

"This resolution could be seen by some as an act of good faith, that nothing else changes. And I think that's absolutely right," O'Brien said, speaking to those in attendance moments before the vote. "This is a very important step today for the city to take this action, but it by itself does nothing to change the reality."

O'Brien was referencing that, as a resolution, the measure is nonbinding, meaning the city isn't legally mandated to enact it. However, to attendees, many of them organizers who had dedicated the last three years of their lives to this movement, there is a moral and human imperative that its promises be fulfilled—not just for the city but also for the United States.

"I think the city council members are gatekeepers, just like anyone else, and if they're committed to an anti-racist vision, they're going to have to make sure they're centering themselves in the community," said Senait Brown, one of EPIC's lead organizers, who could barely contain her jubilation after the resolution passed.

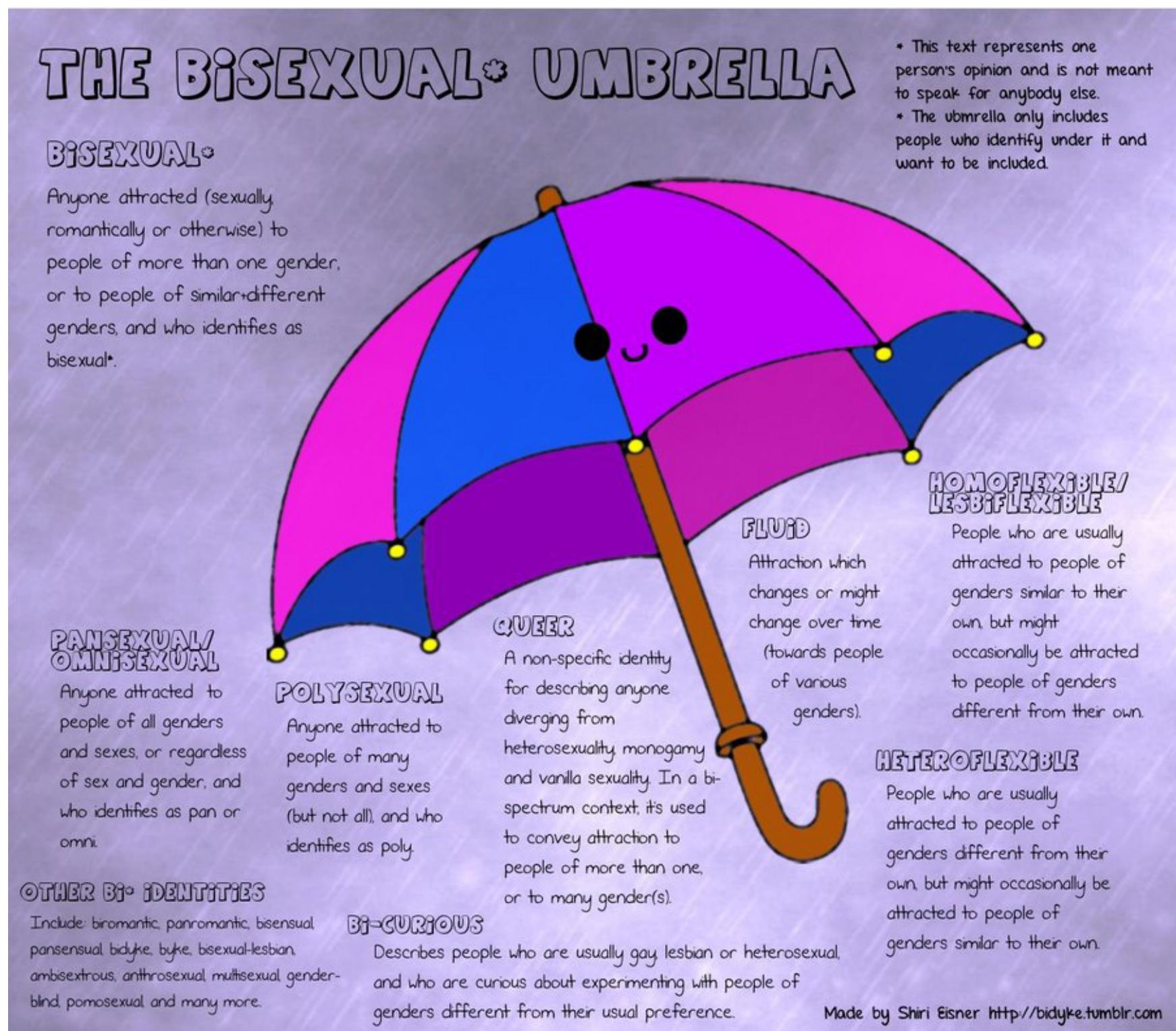
"Our job is to build our community, to build our analysis, to build our strength, to build our resilience, to keep tight about what standard it is that we want to see for black youth in Seattle, and that's what we're going to continue to do, to continue to hold every institutional body accountable to that."

By Marcus Harrison Green originally published on YES! Magazine. Sept 22, 2015.



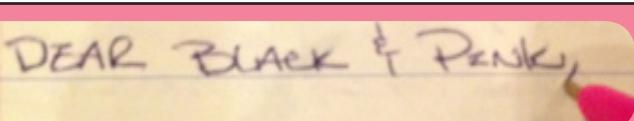
BISEXUAL AWARENESS WEEK

Celebrate Bisexuality Day, held every September 23rd. This day is part of Bisexual Awareness Week that works to increase visibility of bisexual people and to raise awareness of the unique challenges and barriers bisexual people face. Here's an illustration by Shiri Eisner defining some terms related to bisexuality.



ADDRESSES: PLEASE NOTE OUR NEW ADDRESSES FOR MAIL!

Please Note: You can send multiple requests/topics in one envelope! Due to concerns about consent and confidentiality, you cannot sign up other people for the newspaper. However, we can accept requests from multiple people in the same envelope. There's no need to send separate requests in more than one envelope. If you are being released and would still like to receive a copy of the newspaper, please let us know the address we can send the newspaper to!

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Black & Pink Organization Feedback-- Especially the Slip on Page 9	Black & Pink - Feedback
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Advocacy Requests- Include details about situation and thoughts about how calls or letters might help	Black & Pink - Advocacy
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Pen Pal Program: LGBTQ prisoners can list their information and short non-sexual ad on the internet where free world people can see it and decide to write. There will be a Pen-Pal Request Form in the Newspaper every 4 months.